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THE ART OF THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE.¹

THERE are two periods in the history of the world's art that are of supreme interest: the age of Pericles and the Italian Renaissance. But they are widely different in their character. The age of Pericles was the culmination of a long and harmonious development, the glorious blossoming of a perfect flower, which had grown in symmetrical grace to bloom in ideal beauty.

Not so with the Renaissance. No period of humanity has been torn with more conflicting ideas, with more diverse aspirations, with more opposing passions. Greek literature and Greek art had come again to light, and the hearts of many, carried away by the loveliness of this world, longed to return to the bright days of old when beauty was all in all, and men gathered to watch the naked runners at Olympia straining their forms of matchless grace and power, or stood upon the shore of the Athenian Gulf to look at Phryne as she rose as Aphrodite from the purple sea. But in other breasts the religious fervor of the middle ages, the hatred of the pomp and glory of the earth, glowed as warmly as in the bosom of Peter the Hermit when he aroused Europe to throw itself upon Asia in the hope of recovering the holy sepulcher. Never before had there been such a conflict in the minds of men, not even in the days when Christianity had fought its great battle with pagan

¹"The Venetian Painters of the Renaissance," "The Florentine Painters of the Renaissance," "The Central Italian Painters of the Renaissance." by Bernhard Berenson. G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York.

Rome. What made the conflict so intense and so peculiar was that the new spirit did not come as a distinct faith against which the forces of conservatism could be clearly drawn. The lovers of antique art did not cease to be Christians, they were not even heretics, so that they could not be burned at the stake and an end made of the matter, as Simon de Montfort had wiped out in blood the brilliant civilization of Provence when a holy war had been proclaimed against the troubadours because they sang too sweetly of woman's love and of earthly beauty. The spirit of the Renaissance penetrated into every heart, and the conflict went on in the bosom of every man. For long centuries men had bowed beneath the yoke of an ascetic discipline imposed by a religious fervor that had blinded them to the loveliness of nature, and had looked upon the fair earth as a hideous dungeon haunted by evil spirits, upon the body as an unclean tenement of clay that imprisoned the soul and dragged it down to sin. Slowly their eyes were opened. They looked upon the world, and they saw that, though defaced by the ravages of man and stained by his crimes, it was still fair and good; and in their breasts there grew up, although they struggled against it, the old pagan love for the beauty of external things, for the purple sea breaking forever on the silver sands, for the sunlight's brilliance as it fell upon fields of golden grain and hills clothed in verdure; above all, for the beauty of the human countenance, for the grace of the human form. But these feelings were not simple and unmixed as in the bosom of a Greek. In every breast there were also the spiritual aspirations, the hatred of the world, the flesh, and the devil that characterized the middle age. These inconsistent elements waged an incessant war. Sometimes, as in the case of Fra Angelico, the spiritual side had almost the entire victory; sometimes, as in the case of Titian, the new paganism almost uprooted the Christian spirit; and sometimes, as in the case of Raffael, they were blended together in harmonious union.

When the Renaissance began we cannot tell. Far back into the dark ages we can see the spirit stirring, now manifest-

ing itself here, now there, but always sternly repressed by the bigotry of the time. But when at length the human intellect broke its fetters, its advance was extremely rapid. Petrarch was already seventeen years of age when Dante died, yet the spirit of Dante is almost entirely medieval, while the spirit of Petrarch is almost entirely classic. And yet, as showing how the two spirits were intermingled, the very groundwork of Petrarch's poetry is of the middle age. One of the peculiarities of the middle age was its constant yearning for the unattainable. That which was within reach was without value; that which was beyond the grasp was longed for with infinite desire. Men cared little for their own wives or for any whom they could win. Every knight chose some lady in whose honor he might achieve his feats of arms, every minnesinger or troubadour chose one to whom to address his songs of love and war; but it was always some one beyond their reach, either because she was the wife of another or because of her exalted rank. It was this purely spiritual love alone that found poetic expression; and there was so little reality in it, it was so entirely a matter of the imagination, that the real objects of human love cared nothing about it. His visionary love for Beatrice did not prevent Dante from marrying and having ten children, and his good wife Gemma no doubt valued the poet's devotion to his shadow at its true worth. Had Beatrice come to Dante or Laura to Petrarch, the poets would doubtless have wept over their shattered dream, and have chosen some other woman as the object of their spiritual devotion. This visionary love, which it is so hard for us now to realize, was the natural result of the absorption of the middle age in the things of the spirit and the abhorrence of the things of the flesh.¹

Though the Renaissance owed its awakening to the re-discovery of antiquity, there is a vast gulf between the art

¹ Perhaps the best illustration of this peculiar kind of love is the Florentine poet Sacchetti, who married three successive wives, and in the mean time addressed all his poems to a fourth woman.

of Greece and that of Italy. In ancient art it was the type that was sought, each artist striving to produce the ideal of perfect beauty, free from the imperfections of any individual man or woman. With the soul Greek art has little to do. The expression upon the faces is usually one of Olympian serenity alone; and if human passions are portrayed, as in the Laocoon, it is only in their simplest form.

Far different was the Renaissance. Christianity and the middle ages had swept across men's lives, and they had learned to turn their glance inward, probing the soul's most hidden mysteries. Instead of faces which merely express the joy of living in a joyous world, in a world still bright with the freshness of its glorious youth, we have countenances in which are depicted all the passions of humanity, its most secret instincts, its vaguest aspirations. It is no longer the type that is sought for; it is the individual. Instead of trying to eliminate from the work of art all that is personal to the model, leaving only the abstraction of ideal beauty, the effort is to represent the individual person, the individual soul. Instead of endeavoring to produce from many imperfections a single perfect type, they strive to show how body differs from body, spirit from spirit. Leonardo da Vinci would follow all day long a person whose countenance struck him as they passed upon the street, seeking to penetrate the secret of personality and to fix upon his sketch-book the charm of feature or expression with which he had been impressed—trying to seize those very elements of being that Apelles would have been most anxious to exclude.

Therefore, while the purpose of Greek art was the attainment of abstract perfection, the purpose of Renaissance art was the expression of the individual countenance and form. In this respect nearly all modern art has followed the guidance of the Renaissance, not of antiquity. We admire antique art, but its calm grandeur is no longer possible to our souls, torn as they are with conflicting feelings undreamed of by a Greek; and when we try to imitate it we are usually merely stiff and academic. But the people of the

Italian Renaissance are our true ancestors. Their feelings were the same as ours, only more intense; they were confronted by the same problems; their art deals with the same sentiments, the same aspirations; and in the study of their works the modern artist will find infinite profit and inspiration.

The result of this seeking after individuality is that Renaissance art is far more varied than that of antiquity. In Greece every artist was striving for the same thing, for the highest type of beauty or of strength, so that there is a certain sameness in their works. Scopas is more vehement; Praxiteles, more voluptuous; but they are in search of the same ideals, and even among the ancients their works were hopelessly confused—a thing that could never happen in the case of Michelangelo, Raffael, Leonardo, Correggio, and Titian.

And it was in consequence of this love of individuality that painting became the favorite art of the Renaissance as sculpture was the favorite art of Greece. Sculpture is best suited to the creation of ideal types; painting, to the depicting of individual expression. And in the hands of the artists of the Renaissance the function of sculpture is completely changed. Instead of plastic forms with brows on which sits the serenity of Olympus, the body is used as a vehicle for the utterance of the most complex feelings; and often the artist thinks not of its beauty, but only of the expressiveness of the tortured limbs.

And this striving after individuality in art is only an expression of the spirit of the age. There are times in the world's history when the individual is completely absorbed in the mass of his fellows; when all men are seeking a single ideal, each rejoicing to subordinate himself to the spirit that animates the whole. Such in art were the middle ages, when myriads of men cooperated in the erection of those marvelous Gothic cathedrals which are the wonder of all succeeding generations, and yet all were so absorbed in their work that we know not even the names of the architects from whose astounding brains could spring the con-

ception of those vast structures with their infinite complications of ornament and slender shafts reaching heavenward their stony arms in rapturous prayer to the throne of grace—men who cared only for their work and who did not even carve their names upon those pillars, the least of which would have made them immortal.

There are other times that are periods of disintegration, when the bonds that bound men together are loosened, and when each strikes out for himself, or combines with others only for purposes of temporary advantage, moved by no common impulse, but each seeking for himself pleasure, power, riches, or fame. Such a period was the Peloponnesian War, the fall of the Roman Republic, the dissolution of the Roman Empire, the Italian Renaissance, the Thirty Years' War, the French Revolution, times of intense personal activity, of strong individual development, when the human soul breaks its fetters and revels in a freedom that too often leads to dissolution and ruin. These are not the most wholesome periods in the world's records, but they are the periods of greatest interest. In them we pass from history to biography. We are no longer concerned with the movement of vast inert masses—we are fascinated by intense personalities, each of which differs from the other, having different ideas, different aspirations, different characteristics. And of all these periods of transition, when the old idols are crumbling and thousands of new ones are clamoring to take their places, when the old ties of association have been broken and new ones have not yet been established, when men are free to pursue the bent of their own spirits without constraint, when each stands distinct from the mass of humanity—the Italian Renaissance is the most attractive. It was a time of vehement activity, when brain and nerves and sinews were strained to the utmost; when each strove most passionately for himself, freeing himself most completely from his fellow men, a time of intense light and of Cimmerian darkness, of great virtues and astounding crimes, of princes like the Visconti, of whom it was said that their hate was fratricide and their love was incest; of

popes like Sixtus IV. and Alexander Borgia, who defiled the chair of St. Peter with orgies that would have shocked the companions of Nero and at whose poisoned banquets Death presided as master of the revels; of saints like Fra Angelico and Savonarola; of murderous bacchantes like Lucretia Borgia and of holy matrons like Vittoria Colonna; a time of upheaval, of tumult, of confusion, when a mere condottiere like Sforza, selling his sword and his mercenaries to the highest bidder, could become a sovereign, when principalities were daily changed into republics and republics into principalities; when the ruler of to-day was the exile of to-morrow, only to return again in triumph to exact a bloody vengeance; a time almost of anarchy when men yet loved art and learning with an intensity of devotion that has never since been equaled, when the artist quietly painted his altar piece or his Venus rising from the sea, or the scholar drank rapturously at the newly discovered fount of the Grecian Muses while men were cutting each other's throats outside his door—a time, in short, when a man could be anything if he only had the boldness, the cunning, or the strength. No age is so varied in its interest. Each city has its different architecture, its different art, and its individual history full of the storm and stress of conflicting passions. The very air seemed surcharged with electricity, here shining as a splendid beacon giving light to an admiring world; there crashing downward as a thunderbolt, bearing destruction in its wake. In this atmosphere, where all things were possible for good or evil, life was intense, passionate, voluptuous, cruel, as it has rarely been, and yet pervaded everywhere by a spirit of humanistic culture strangely at variance with the brutal ferocity that was continually breaking forth. The art of such an age must necessarily possess a peculiar and enduring interest.

While we cannot say when the spirit of the Renaissance began, we can fix with certainty the time and place when it manifested itself in art. It was in the city of Pisa and in the person of Niccolo Pisano. He would no doubt have died a maker of medieval images, but in a happy moment

his eyes fell upon an ancient sarcophagus still preserved in the Pisan Campo Santo. Then the divine beauty of antique art flashed upon his mind, and he resolved that he too would be a sculptor. He had to modify the ancient forms to suit the requirements of Christianity; but he grasped the spirit of antiquity, and it is surprising to see how he threw off the shackles which had bound him, and how noble and lifelike are his compositions. But his sons and pupils, though able and meritorious sculptors, returned to the medieval spirit, and it was not through them that the divine fire was handed down.

As Giotto, the peasant lad, was watching his flock, draw the figure of a goat upon a fragment of slate, the painter, Cimabue was attracted to the lad's bright face and was struck with the excellence of his drawing. He induced the boy's father to entrust him to his care, and took him into Florence, then merely a medieval city, with scarcely any of those noble edifices that now give it an undying interest. There the boy studied, learned how to mix colors, and became the greatest artist of his age, one of the greatest of all time. To appreciate his merits we must try to place ourselves in his position, with nothing around save ugly, stiff Byzantine saints and Madonnas, with no life in their emaciated faces and wooden forms. Into art he breathed the breath of life. No man has ever excelled him in telling a story. His few figures, grouped with consummate judgment, express the idea intended with a simple directness that makes the matter clear to every beholder; and they stand out as though we could clasp them in our arms. The expression of their face is noble and in accordance with the subject, and their gestures are appropriate. The draperies are arranged in heavy vertical folds, but they are real draperies. No man ever did so much for art, and as we look at his numerous frescos in the Arena Chapel at Padua, in the church of St. Francis at Assisi, in the several churches at Florence, we marvel at the excellence of his work and see in it the germs of the future glories of Raffael and Michelangelo.

And as an architect he even excelled his achievements as a painter. Others have painted pictures far more beautiful than his, though none has progressed so far beyond the work of his immediate predecessors; but no one has ever constructed a tower that in beauty will compare with that campanile which remains the fairest ornament of Florence. He who has not looked upon it can have no idea of its amazing grace, its strength and delicacy, the symmetry of its proportions.

Unlike Niccolo Pisano, Giotto was little affected by the remains of antique art. His guide was his own unerring eye, his close study of the things about him. Like his friend Dante, of whom he has left two splendid portraits, and whose praise of him in the *Divine Comedy* would have made him immortal if his works had not done so, his spirit was still purely medieval; but as in Dante's case, the scales were falling from his eyes, so that he saw things about him as they were.

After the death of the great master his work went bravely on. Taddeo Gaddi, Simone Memmi, Orcagna, Lorenzetti, and many others continued his labors, painting pictures which have been the delight of all succeeding generations, while Paolo Uccelli solved the mysteries of perspective, so that landscape became possible.

But the first truly great name after that of Giotto is Ghiberti's. He devoted a long life to the making of two sets of doors for the Baptistery of Florence, but in them he has raised to himself a monument more enduring than the pyramids of Egypt. No work more original than the last and perfect set was ever undertaken. Ghiberti had before him noble bas-reliefs of ancient times which he might have imitated; but he turned his back upon them, and created a new form of art, a strange combination of pictorial design and relief treatment which he alone has been able to handle with entire success. All the rules of the bas-relief are disregarded, and instead he gives us pictures in bronze, the figures in front in high relief, those behind shading off into lower and lower relief to express the gradations of distance.

In ten compartments he sets forth the history of the world from the creation of man to the visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon in his glory, and the perfect grace and delicacy of his work leaves all that had been achieved by his predecessors far behind. Michelangelo declared his doors were worthy to be the gates of Paradise; and though four hundred years have since passed away, nothing of a similar kind has been produced that is worthy for a moment to be compared with them.

One of the greatest influences on the progress of the Renaissance was Donatello, perhaps the foremost of all the sculptors who preceded Michelangelo. His achievements are extremely varied. He was devoted to classic art, and some of his works can scarcely be distinguished from antiques; but he was also intensely alive to the world around him, and he is at times an extreme realist. His sense of life and movement is extraordinary, and no man ever had a clearer comprehension of the effect of position upon sculpture. Each of his works looks better in the place for which it is destined than it would look anywhere else. He impressed strongly upon his contemporaries and successors the fact that it was necessary to study classic art with absorbing interest, but at the same time to preserve one's individuality, and his influence was as beneficial as it was far-reaching.

The next painter to make a great stride forward was Masaccio, the marvelous genius from whose brilliant hands death snatched the brush at the early age of twenty-seven, but whose frescos in the Brancacci chapel at Florence were the school in which all his successors received their best training. It was he who first mastered the problems of dealing with the nude, of motion, of draperies. After him all things were possible. If we compare his paintings with what has since been achieved, they seem excellent work and nothing more; but if we compare them with the works of his predecessors, the immensity of his progress is at once apparent. He is to the art of Florence what Giorgione was to the art of Venice, what Marlowe was to English literature, a heaven-inspired young genius, who blazed out the way for

Raffael and Michelangelo as the others blazed it out for Titian and Shakspeare. Before him painting was an attempt; after him it became an achievement. How long its progress might have been delayed had he never been born we do not know; but we recognize the great impulse which he gave to the onward movement, and we see the results in the wonderful galaxy of great artists that sprang up to carry on his work.

And far away in the north, at Mantua, there soon arose another whose influence was scarcely less, who as a draftsman stands beside Michelangelo and Albert Dürer, the great Mantegna. For him the drawing was all, the color was a matter of indifference. Of all the artists of the Renaissance, he was most imbued with the spirit of antique art. His works, though done in colors, could be transmuted into relief with less loss of effect than those of any other painter. What Masaccio did for modeling and Giorgione for color he did for outline. Of all great painters, he is perhaps the only one whose full effect could be caught from an outline engraving. The finest of his works is probably the "Triumph of Julius Cæsar," to be seen at Hampton Court; but to Padua and particularly to Mantua one must go fully to realize his power. He had few imitators—his art was too severe for that—but all who have followed him have been greatly influenced by the power of his drawing.

But to return to Florence. Fra Angelico, though he survived Masaccio many years, profited nothing by his lessons. In point of modeling he is scarcely equal to Giotto and the earliest masters. We cannot even distinguish that there are any limbs beneath his heavy draperies. In his eyes the human body was hateful and unclean. It was the soul alone that he regarded. He was himself the purest and most saintly being upon whom the sun has ever shone, and all his spiritual fervor glows in his works. The faces of his saints and angels are transfigured with the light of the spirit, carried away by a celestial rapture. He cannot depict the wicked and the base. But in the representation of the joys of paradise and the ecstasy of religious fervor he is beyond

all comparison, and as a colorist in his peculiar way he stands alone. He uses only the clearest and brightest hues, which in the hands of another would inevitably seem crude, but which in his have all the harmony and splendor of the rainbow. Often it is difficult to decide to whom pictures should be assigned, and every day the views of critics change; but none who has seen one of his ever doubts for a moment when he sees another. As soon might you expect a man who has seen a rainbow to doubt the identity of the phenomenon when it appears again.

Among Masaccio's successors was Botticelli, one of the most fascinating painters that ever lived. In no one else do we see so plainly depicted that struggle between the medieval and the classic which constitutes the groundwork of the Renaissance. His culture and aspirations were classical; it is with classical subjects that he loves to deal. But his soul still belongs to the middle ages, and his classical subjects are treated with all the subtle spiritual grace that was characteristic of medieval thought. It is the beauty of women that he loves to paint; but instead of the strong, healthy womanhood of classic art that would become his topics, there is a languid, spiritualized, almost unwholesome delicacy. In him we see the middle age looking out upon the new world that has arisen, and unveiling its form, which has grown thin and delicate in the seclusion of its sad life, vainly attempting to rival the strong vitality of the ancient time. It is as if some slender nun brought up in the shadow of the cloister should attempt to rise with Phryne from the sea.

The man who profited most by Masaccio's work was Signorelli, and so well did he profit that he became one of the greatest masters of anatomy that the world has ever known. His province was the nude. Condemned by the exigencies of the time to paint mostly figures that are draped, no one can have any idea of his power who has not visited the cathedral at Orvieto. In the picture of Paradise we see every pose of restful quiet; in the Resurrection we see every attitude of easy motion as the awakened dead clamber out of their graves, and stretch themselves after their long sleep;

in the Hell we have every distortion of the body engaged in the fiercest struggles and racked by the bitterest pains. His power to represent the body was hardly excelled even by Michelangelo, but he lacked the deep spiritual meaning of that sublime genius.

When these and Della Robbia, Lippo Lippi, Ghirlandajo, Perugino, and many others whom I have not the time to mention, had prepared the way, there came the giants—Leonardo da Vinci, Raffael, and Michelangelo.

Leonardo's picture of the Last Supper was universally conceded to be the masterpiece of painting. It has perished now, and before its desecrated remains we can only mourn as beside a tomb. The best idea that we can get of it is by a visit to the Royal Academy in London. There, in a room at the top of many flights of weary steps, is a copy of the size of the original by Marco d'Uggione, one of his pupils, a copy that was made in the lifetime of the master, and which is as well preserved as if it were painted yesterday.

But though in Leonardo's great masterpiece there is no woman's figure, yet this man, who was so powerful that he could break the strongest horseshoe with his naked hands, whose vast mind embraced all the knowledge of the time and forecast many of the discoveries of the future, loved most the face of woman, and in depicting the subtle charm of womanhood he has no rival. For his women he has a smile which is all his own, whose meaning is as unfathomable as the sea, and which haunts us like a magic spell. Most persons, on first seeing the Mona Lisa, exclaim in some disappointment that she is rather plain than beautiful; but few are they who have looked upon that face, and afterward gone away and forgotten it.

There was never a greater genius than Leonardo, but his dreams of perfection were so far beyond anything that even he could accomplish that he rarely completed anything. Still the few pictures that he has left us are inexpressibly precious, finished to a marvelous perfection, and filled with subtle charm. And he has bequeathed us a number of drawings and sketches, the most precious that have come

down to us from any artist, and which reveal in an amazing manner the strength and the wonderful subtlety of his genius.

The strongest man who ever devoted himself to art was Michelangelo; not strong with the calm, tranquil strength of Grecian art, but with the strength of a troubled soul, torn with conflicting passions, dreaming impossible dreams, striving upward with bitterness and despair. No man was ever so solitary. He lived in the world, but he was not of it. His companions were his vast dreams, before whose immensity the world around faded into insignificance. He had a deep affection for a few friends and for his old servant, Urbino, who had waited upon him for so many years, and was devotedly attached to his worthless family; but in the course of his long life he seems to have loved no woman, unless the noble Vittoria Colonna, who inspired in his breast a mystical but apparently Platonic devotion that found expression in some of those wonderful sonnets so full of spiritual meaning and which, in spite of their roughness and want of artistic finish, are among the richest treasures of Italian literature; and it was only when she lay cold in death that he presumed so far as to kiss her brow.

In art his domain was the grand and terrible, and in that domain he has remained without a peer. He was scarcely more than a boy when he carved that gigantic David facing Goliath, before whose superhuman wrath and defiance all other statues seem weak save his own Moses, who, straight from converse with the Deity, sits as the vicegerent of God, proud with a supernatural pride, strong with a superhuman strength, not the mild and gentle lawgiver, but one who has come to deliver the edicts of God to a world that must crouch and obey. And in the figures on the Medici tombs he has expressed a sorrow, a weariness of life, in which is summed up the grief and ennui of a world.

His achievements as a painter were not less prodigious. No man can stand beneath the Sistine's vault and look up at the tremendous forms of the prophets and sybils, and the youthful athletes who accompany them, at the vast pictures

in which are set forth the history of the universe down to the drunkenness of Noah, without being overcome with a sense of awe.

But of all the supreme trio, the most perfect was Raffael. Beautiful, gentle, kind, and considerate as a woman, modest and unaffected amidst all his triumphs, strong and manly when occasion required the assertion of manhood, he seems to have been without a flaw. His life was public; he went attended by a host of scholars, like the retinue of a prince; he lived in as fierce a light as ever beat upon a throne; but there has not come down to us the record of one unkind act, of one ungenerous thought. No man ever possessed such a wonderful capacity for winning hearts. From his cradle up every one loved him, every one delighted to help him forward in his glorious career. His life was one long triumph, but success puffed him up with no pride, took nothing away from the sweetness of his smile. In his studio he had fifty pupils, many of them already distinguished artists, who attended him when he went abroad as though he were a monarch, profiting by every word that dropped from his lips, watching every movement of his divine brush; and such was his influence that amongst this great concourse, drawn from all parts of Europe and filled with the natural jealousy and nervous sensibility of artists, peace and kindness and a joyous cheerfulness reigned undisturbed. And when on his thirty-seventh birthday the prince of painters died (a martyr to his love of antique art) of a fever caught in the excavation of some ruins, he was mourned as artist never was, and every man who had beheld that beautiful face felt that he had lost a friend.

His art is the reflection of the sweetness, the light, and the complete harmony of his perfect soul. He was not a heavenly dreamer, like Fra Angelico. He lived in this world, but he saw it in the light of his own eyes, pure, noble, and beautiful. Though, as his frescos in the Vatican prove, no man could excel him in depicting a lofty and harmonious strength, it was the purity and beauty of woman, the innocence and charm of childhood, that attracted him most, and

they find their supreme expression in those Madonnas which will remain unrivaled as long as the world endures.

He was one of the most original of men, yet no man was ever so receptive. In his youth he adopted the style of every master under whom he worked, giving to it, however, a dignity, a grace, a purity, that were all his own. Even in the full vigor of his manhood, in the splendor of his glory, he did not disdain to learn from Michelangelo; and in every case it was a gain. He did not imitate, he did not subordinate his own harmonious genius to that of any other man; but he appropriated their ideas, and lent to them his own peculiar charm and grace.

Meanwhile across the Apenines there were others who were winning for themselves a fame scarcely less glorious.

At Parma Correggio was at work, and no more original artist ever existed. Far away from the great centers of art life, with little guidance save his own aspiration, he worked out an art all his own. In technic its highest merit is its wonderful light and shade, that mastery of chiaroscuro in which it stands alone; and its most striking moral quality is its fresh joyousness. It is not the rapt ecstasy of Fra Angelico; it is a radiant joy that springs from an excess of buoyant spirits, a pagan gladness, a breath of the world's fresh youth. It is like the joy of some faun playing in the sunlight. He is the painter of youth and childhood. Such boys, such children are not to be seen elsewhere—so bright, so full of animal spirits, so radiantly happy. He abhors darkness and loves the light, the glad light of this world. It is to gladsome subjects that he turns: to the birth of the young Christ, with the lovely young angels singing their hosannas; to the assumption of the Virgin into heaven, with all the angelic host streaming upward in transcendent joy. In such scenes he is perfect.

And he goes back with a peculiar and unequalled sympathy to the myths of ancient times, to the wanton loves of the gods of Greece, to Jupiter descending to meet Danae in a shower of gold, creeping toward the sleeping Antiope in the guise of a satyr, enfolding the lovely Io in his cloudy em-

brace, or toying as a swan with the fair Leda; to Diana driving her chariot in triumphant beauty; to Mars and Venus and Cupid.

Of all strange survivals of past ages, Correggio is the most amazing. He is a Greek of the Ionian Isles, the fit companion of Sappho, of Alcæus, of Anacreon, full of the joy of life, of the adoration of physical beauty, blithe as a skylark, lovely as the morning. The return to the pagan spirit is not with him the result of study and conscious effort, as with most of his contemporaries; he was born a pagan of the gladsome days when the forests were full of fauns and dryads, when a nymph lay hidden in every fountain, when the wilderness trembled with the sighs of the amorous Pan. How such a spirit could have survived the darkness and the sorrow of the middle ages, its joy undimmed, its brightness untarnished, fresh as in the days when Apollo watched the flocks of Admetus on the Thessalian plains, is one of those problems of which there is no solution.

In Venice all the mysteries of deep and glowing color, all the rich, voluptuous beauty of pagan life were revealed to the young Giorgione. In his earliest manhood he was stricken down, but he passed the torch on to Titian, in whose hands it blazed with matchless brilliance and for an unexampled length of days.

No artist ever had so prosperous a career as Titian. Success attended him from the first, and during his ninety-nine years no cloud dimmed the brightness of his horizon. To the end of that marvelous age he retained all his faculties, producing masterpieces to the last, and dying finally of the plague, a hale and hearty old man. The princes and potentates of the earth chose him to leave their image to posterity, and it was the monarch of Austria and Germany, of Spain and the Indies, upon whose vast dominions the sun never set, who picked up the brush that he had dropped, saying that a Titian was worthy to be served by an emperor.

As a colorist and as an exponent of the wholesome, strong beauty of this world he remains forever without a rival.

Some critics abuse him because he has not the religious fervor of Fra Angelico, the divine purity and elevation of Raffael. But it is well that it is so. He could not have improved upon them in their sphere, while in his own he is the undisputed master, revealing to us the beauty of terrestrial things, particularly the loveliness of women, as no one else has done. It is an art that appeals chiefly to the mind and the senses, and but little to the soul; but there is nothing morbid about it. It is as healthy as it is beautiful, and only the narrowest minds can blame him because he painted so well the loveliness of the world in which we live.

Paul Veronese and Tintoretto are splendid painters, but far inferior to Titian. Tintoretto was a man of surprising genius, but in most of his works he was hasty, impetuous, and theatrical, dashing them off at lightning speed and in unpleasant colors which have now become so darkened with time as to be repulsive. Ruskin has written many books to prove that they are the greatest paintings in all the world; but those huge black compositions crowded with figures and painted at breakneck speed are certainly caviar to the general. But if we go into the Doge's Palace, and look at his Marriage of Bacchus and Ariadne, his Mercury and the Graces and his Minerva driving back Mars, we will perceive that in his happier moments he could be one of the most delightful painters that ever lived.

Veronese's art is as uniform as Tintoretto's is capricious. He is devoted alone to depicting the pomp and luxury of this world, and his specialty, in which he stands unrivaled, is banquet scenes, where the splendor of fine raiment, of stately architecture, of sumptuous furnishing, and handsome people can be best set forth.

With Veronese the glories of the Renaissance passed away. In the next age there was a brief revival when the Caracci, Domenichino, Guido Reni, and Guercino produced many fine pictures that are now too little esteemed. A hundred years ago they were classed with the master works of Raffael and Michelangelo, but now they have fallen into a disrepute as undeserved as their previous exaltation. But, ex-

cellent as these artists are, they were only a splendid after-glow, and when they had passed away an utter darkness settled over the peninsula that had once been the torch at which was lighted the civilization of the world.

There is nothing more striking than the sudden ending of Renaissance art. Greek art reached the zenith in the age of Pericles, but its long afternoon was almost as brilliant as its noonday splendor. But when the sun of Italian art had reached its meridian it was suddenly eclipsed. This was partly due to exhaustion, but was principally the result of political causes.

While all this brilliant life was going on in Italy, while the peninsula was divided among a number of petty principalities maintaining the balance of power as carefully as the Europe of to-day, each a center of a rich artistic activity, beyond the Alps, in those countries of the North and West of which the Italians rarely thought, and then only with contempt as a region of barbarism and darkness, forces were at work of which they scarcely reckoned. Slowly out of the anarchy and turmoil of the middle ages two great kingdoms were emerging, France and Spain—kingdoms that cared not for the arts, but rejoiced in war and rapine; before whose vast armies of mail-clad knights the Italian mercenaries must be scattered as chaff before the wind. They rose above Italy like black and angry waves ready to break and overwhelm the land; but she saw not the danger, and went on with her masks and her revels, her painting and her sculpture, heedless of the wrath to come. In an evil hour Ludovico il Moro, Duke of Milan, invoked the assistance of the French. This brought the Spaniard also into the peninsula, and from that time forth havoc and desolation reigned supreme. Italy, where serious war had been for centuries unknown, became the battle-ground of Europe. The mail-clad knights of France, the iron infantry of Spain, the ruthless reiters of Germany, who dreamed only of blood and gold, and to whose rude natures art could make no appeal, marched back and forth, devastating the land and trampling upon the people, until in the wretched-

ness of slavery they lost their genius and their manhood, and became as incapable of artistic production as Greece when she was reduced to the condition of a Roman province.

Moreover, Italy had returned toward classic times until it had become almost pagan, while the rest of Europe was still imbued with the spirit of the middle age. The pilgrims from the North, seeing the wealth, the luxury, the immorality of Italian life, in which the Church took the lead, were shocked beyond measure; and doubtless to the rude visitors from beyond the Alps many pictures which are now the glory of the world gave greater offense than the murders of the Borgias. Germany rose in revolt; and Switzerland, Holland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and England threw in their lot with her. Even in France the authority of the pope was assailed. In this hour of the Church's extreme peril the fierce and bigoted Spaniards seized the helm, and fought out with measurable success the long battle against the forces of the Protestant revolt; and they trampled the bright Italian race under foot as cruelly as they had done the people of Mexico and Peru.

Crushed and bleeding, Italy thought no more of art, and, under the tyranny of the Spanish Inquisition, she sank into such a state of degradation that not only was she unable to produce works worthy of her past, but she could not even appreciate those which she possessed, and covered many of them with hideous whitewash.

So perished the Italian Renaissance, but its results can never die, and as long as man loves the beautiful and the grand it will be studied with a loving care devoted to no other epoch of modern times. It has been to the modern world what Greece was to the ancient, the glorious beacon at which the torches of civilization have been lit.

Of all the aids to the understanding of the art of this period, Mr. Berenson's three little volumes are perhaps the most valuable. They are marvels of insight and of suggestiveness. With wonderful penetration he has seized the very essence of the art of each master, and in a few brief paragraphs

enables the reader to comprehend his merits and his limitations. Every one contemplating a trip abroad should read these masterly little treatises, and the oldest student of Renaissance art will find in them food for reflection. He may perhaps differ from some of Mr. Berenson's conclusions, for uniformity in matters of taste is not possible; but, no matter how profound may have been his studies, he will discover that these little volumes will throw a new light upon the subject. Each volume is provided with a list of the works of each master, prepared upon the basis of the latest criticism. It is sad to look through it and see how greatly the authentic works of most of them have been diminished, but their fame shines out only the brighter and clearer now that they are no longer held responsible for so much that was unworthy of their genius.

In conclusion we may say that we cannot too highly recommend these little books, whether to the general reader or to the professional student of art. When the fourth volume is issued we shall have the ablest and the most condensed presentation yet made of the very essence of Renaissance painting.

G. B. ROSE.